

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 OMB-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 L-03 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 SAB-01 ARAE-00 IO-13 /078 W
-----091837Z 112997 /50

O R 091740Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 659
INFO PANCANAL
USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, PFOR, PN, PQ
SUBJECT: TORRIJOS MEETING WITH CANAL ZONE UNION LEADERS

REF: PANAMA 0724

SUMMARY: TORRIJOS MET WITH CANAL ZONE US-CITIZEN LABOR LEADERS
FEBRUARY 7 AND SOUGHT TO REASSURE THEM THAT LABOR GAINS WOULD
BE RESPECTED UNDER NEW TREATY. HE AGAIN STRESSED OWNERSHIP
OF HOUSES BY INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEES. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION
FROM A US UNION LEADER PANAMANIAN SAID THEY HAD AS YET
HEARD NOTHING FROM US TEAM ABOUT "LABOR ANNEX" TO THE NEW
TREATY, BUT HAD SUGGESTED DISCUSSING IT. REACTION SO FAR IN
CANAL ZONE IS BEST SUMMARIZED AS IRRITATION THAT THE PANA-
MANIAN, RATHER THAN THE US, NEGOTIATING TEAM TOOK THE LEAD
IN DIRECT CONSULTATION WITH CANAL EMPLOYEES. END SUMMARY.

1. MEETING LASTING ABOUT AN HOUR AND A HALF BETWEEN TORRIJOS
AND CANAL ZONE US-CITIZEN LABOR UNION LEADERS, ARRANGED BY
LOCAL NMU (REF A), WAS HELD IN PANAMA CITY FEBRUARY 7.

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2. PANAMANIAN PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED: TORRIJOS;
AMBASSADOR TO US GONZALEZ-REVILLA; LABOR MINISTER AHUMADA;
LTC ARMANDO BELLIDO, NATIONAL GUARD GENERAL STAFF G-4;
MAJ. JOSE MOTTA, NATIONAL GUARD MARINA COMMANDER; AND
TORRIJOS CONFIDANT RODRIGO GONZALEZ, HEAD OF CERRO
COLORADO COPPER CORP.

3. LABOR LEADERS WERE ALFRED GRAHAM, PRESIDENT, CANAL ZONE CENTRAL LABOR UNION-METAL TRADES COUNCIL, AFL-CIO; CAPT. J. R. WILLIAMS, PRESIDENT AND CAPT. J. M. MORRISSEY, VICE-PRESIDENT, OF PANAMA CANAL PILOTS' ASSOCIATION; AND JACK REVELL, LOCAL 27, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF MASTERS, MATES AND PILOTS (TUG AND FLOATING EQUIPMENT MASTERS). RENE LIOEANJIE, REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF NMU WHO ORGANIZED MEETING, WAS ALSO PRESENT.

4. MEETING WAS COVERED BY LOCAL TV SAME EVENING (FBIS/PANAMA PA 080145Y) AND WAS SUBJECT OF LEAD ARTICLE IN "STAR AND HERALD" FOR FEBRUARY 8. "ESTRELLA" CARRIED SAME ARTICLE LESS PROMINENTLY, AND GOP-GUIDED "CRITICA" AND "MATUTINO" EACH CARRIED SHORTER FRONT-PAGE ARTICLES WITH A PICTURE EACH. ALL COVERAGE HAS BEEN STRAIGHT AND FACTUAL. THERE WAS NO COMMENT FEBRUARY 8.

5. TORRIJOS SOUGHT TO REASSURE LABOR LEADERS THAT LABOR GAINS IN AREAS SUCH AS WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS WOULD BE RESPECTED. UNION LEADERS PRESENTED THEIR VIEWS OF CURRENT ATMOSPHERE OF EMPLOYEE UNCERTAINTY, INSECURITY, AND FEAR OF THE FUTURE.

6. PARTICIPANTS REPORT THAT TORRIJOS UNDERLINED THE POINT OF INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP OF HOUSES, AN IDEA TO WHICH HE APPEARS PERSONALLY ATTACHED. ONE US PARTICIPANT REPORTEDLY ASKED ABOUT STATUS OF "LABOR ANNEX" TO TREATY. PANAMANIAN SIDE REPLIED THAT IT HAD HEARD NOTHING AT ALL FROM US TEAM REGARDING LABOR ANNEX, BUT THAT PANAMA HAD RECENTLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SUGGESTED DISCUSSION OF SUBJECT.

7. TORRIJOS DESIGNATED A FIVE-MAN "HIGH-LEVEL COMMISSION" TO CONTINUE AND EXPAND DIALOGUE BETWEEN HIMSELF AND CANAL ZONE LABOR. LTC BELLIDO WILL SERVE AS THE GENERAL'S PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE, AND THE OTHER FOUR ANNOUNCED MEMBERS ARE AHUMADA, GONZAALIZ-REVILLA, GONZALEZ AND TREATY NEGOTIATING TEAM MEMBER EDWIN FABREGA (SOME PRESS REPORTS OMIT NAMES OF GONZALEZ-REVILLA AND GONZALEZ FROM THIS LIST). PRESS NOTED THAT MOST OF THE US UNION LEADERS WOULD BE OUT OF COUNTRY FOR NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS (FOR AFL-CIO CONVENTION AT BAL HARBOR, FLA.) AND SAID COMMISSION WOULD HOLD ITS FIRST MEETING WITH US UNION LEADERS DURING FIRST PART OF MARCH.

8. PRELIMINARY REACTION FROM US PARTICIPANTS IS MIXED; ONE LEADER CHARACTERIZED THE MEETING'S CONTENT WITH A SINGLE EXPLETIVE, BUT ANOTHER CALLED THE RECEPTION "CORDIAL".

9. REACTION IN CANAL ZONE AT LARGE IS ALSO MIXED. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE IRRITATION THAT OF THE TWO NEGOTIATING PARTIES, PANAMA TOOK INITIATIVE FOR DIRECT CONTACT WITH EMPLOYEE FORCE.

10. CANAL ZONE POLICE UNION PRESIDENT WILLIAM DRUMMOND ASSERTED TO GOVERNOR PARFITT FEBRUARY 7 THAT THIS SESSION HAD BEEN INSTIGATED BY NMU WITH ENCOURAGEMENT OF "STATE DEPARTMENT". EMBASSY HAS CONFIRMED TO PANCANAL THAT THIS IS UNTRUE, BUT DEPT. MAY FACE SIMILAR CHARGES IN WASHINGTON.

11. LIOEANJIE HAS PROMISED EMBASSY A FULL DEBRIEFING ON ON MEETING SHORTLY. WE WILL REPORT FURTHER AFTER OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR HIM AND OTHER PARTICIPANTS.

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12. COMMENT: MOST INTERESTING POINT AT THIS MOMENT IS TORRIJOS' DESIGNATION OF BELLIDO AS HIS "PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE". APPOINTMENT OF "HIGH-LEVEL COMMISSIONS" WITH A GN OFFICER TO RAMROD THINGS HAS BEEN A RECURRENT GOP AND TORRIJOS TACTIC TO DEAL WITH DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. BUT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE KNOW OF THAT HE HAS GONE THIS PARTICULAR ROUTE IN ANYTHING RELATED TO THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS. MOREOVER, WE BELIEVE IT IS THE FIRST TIME HE HAS ALLOWED ONE OF HIS GENERAL STAFF OFFICERS TO BE PUBLICLY AND DIRECTLY ASSOCIATED WITH ANY ASPECT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS.
JORDEN

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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 09-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
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